Chapter IV

Suffocating Identity

Whenever individuals feel alienated in a society and their identity being threatened, they desperately tend to regain it or they create a world of their own and believe it to be the real world. The causes for the alienation may arise out of social, psychological, spiritual, and ideological factors. O’Neill in his New England plays points out that puritanism has dehumanized and perverted man to the extent with sternness and hypocrisy. He has criticized the sham values of the class society and identified possessiveness, repressiveness, lust, pride, revengefulness, and mechanization.

In Diff’rent, the identity of the human personality is perverted by the degenerating forces of Puritanism leading to the oppression of sexual drive resulting in severe distortions to human relationships and identity. The abnormal behaviour of Emma Crosby, a slender girl of twenty of a Seaport Village in New England, is motivated by two ideals; the ideal of piety conforming to puritanism and the ideal of a hero incarnated from romance. Doris V. Falk in Eugene O’Neill and the Tragic Tension identifies Emma as “a victim of Puritanism combined with notions of chivalric love drawn from romantic novels” (71). Crosby’s conception of Caleb Williams is drawn from an illusory idealism. She asserts her belief that her fiancé should be different from the common type in his demeanour and deeds. She is swayed by a dream. She, like Margaret of Brown, cannot love the real man because her approach to life is illusory. She accepts when no man comes up to her: “I don’t love him – what he is now. I loved what I thought he was” (PEO II : 511).

Emma’s conception of marriage is also rooted in illusion. She wishes to have a
sexless marriage. She says: “And so I’ve got it fixed in my head that you and he ought to make a married couple – diff’rent from the rest not that they ain’t all right in their way” (PEO II : 496).

However, it is as Singh in *Eugene O’Neill: Quest for Reality in His Plays* observes:

The crisis in the dramatic action of the play comes when Emma learns about a joke played on Caleb by his colleagues in which he was seduced by a native girl in the South Sea Islands during his last voyage. Without going into the matter, Emma outrightly rejects her fiancé for having fallen short of her image of an ideal hero. No amount of persuasion or penitence can change her mind. Her attitude is obviously generated by the repressive nature of a class society which through its adoption of rigid codes of behaviour seeks to deprive man of natural avenues of fulfilment, thereby driving him to commit unnatural offences against others as well as upon himself. (77-78)

In this play, O’Neill identifies the hypocrisy in society and double – standards in morality. In the course of the play, Jack exposes how committing adultery and fornication is one of the norms of the sailors’ way of life to identify themselves with others in the open world. He says:

“... Oh, it ain't nothin' so out o' the ordinary. Most o' the whalin' men hereabout have run up against it in their time. I've heard Pa and all the others tellin' stories like it out o' their experience...” (PEO II : 502)

Two factors have contributed to the development of Emma’s obstinate disposition.

1. The first is what she has learnt from the study of romantic novels.
2. The second, the rigidity of Puritanism has made Emma so obstinate that she has lost reason and common sense.

The play also tells the subjugation of women and their submissiveness to their husbands while fully aware of their husbands’ debauchery. Harriet and Mrs. Crosby are examples:

HARRIET. (Scornfully) As for me, I wouldn't give a durn about a man that was too goody-goody to raise Cain once in a while--before he married me, I mean. Why, look at Alf Rogers, Emmer. I'm going to marry him some day, ain't I? But I know right well all the foolin' he's done and still is doing, I expect. I ain't sayin' I like it but I do like him and I got to take him the way he is, that's all...” (PEO II : 509)

Mrs. Crosby too has to tolerate her husband’s misdeeds. This shows how helpless a woman is in a male dominated world:

MRS. CROSBY: ... Emmer, d' you s'pose if I'd had your high-fangled notions o' what men ought to be when I was your age, d' you s'pose you'd ever be settin' there now?

EMMA : (Slowly) No. I know from what I can guess from his own stories, Pa never was no saint.

MRS. CROSBY: ... And ain't he been as good a husband to me as ever lived, and a good father to you and Jack? (PEO II : 512)

With Puritanical bent of mind, Emma does not relent. She identifies herself as an eccentric. At the end of the First Act, she dismisses Caleb. But in Act II, her suppressed sexual drives have taken a horrible turn. The repressed sexual drives have played havoc
with Emma. In Act I her approach towards reality is only illusory but in Act II she becomes a totally perverted personality by her repressive sexual energy. She tries to make Benny Rogers, who ought to have been treated by her in a motherly way, a means of expressing her sensualism. She becomes obsessed with him. Her makeup, dress and behaviour reveal the grotesque perversion she has undergone. It is as O’Neill details in \textbf{PEO III : 520}

... But there is something revoltingly incongruous about her, a pitiable sham, a too-apparent effort to cheat the years by appearances. The white dress she wears is too frilly, too youthful for her; so are the high-heeled pumps and cloaked silk stockings. There is an absurd suggestion of rouge on her tight cheeks and thin lips, of penciled make-up about her eyes. The black of her hair is brazenly untruthful. Above all there is shown in her simpering, self-consciously coquettish manner that laughable--and at the same time irritating and disgusting--mockery of undignified age snatching greedily at the empty simulacra of youth. She resembles some passé stock actress of fifty made up for a heroine of twenty.

Emma’s sexual desires, suppressed for more than twenty years, have grotesquely found an opening. Crosby, the Puritan, who will not overlook a slip in the character of Caleb, begins to prostitute Rogers shamelessly. Caleb is shocked to find such a change in Crosby. He comes to know of the proposed marriage between Crosby and his nephew Rogers. Caleb commits suicide.

In \textbf{Diff’rent}, Rogers is a typical, spoilt youth of the American society. He
represents the amorality, frivolity, greediness, meaninglessness, and prodigality of his class. Rogers, prostituted by Crosby, also goes to a prostitute Tilly Small. He gives her an account of his affairs with prostitutes in France. He is a wicked, malicious, and good-for-nothing man. He offers to marry Crosby for money but goes back on his promises when he overhears that Caleb is ready to offer him more money.

In **Elms**, O’Neill dramatizes the oppressiveness of Puritanism with excessive possessiveness of private property and the lust for sensual excesses in rural New England in the mid-nineteenth century. Repressiveness, possessiveness and lust become the basis of the play. Ephraim Cabot is an embodiment of the repressiveness, harshness, rigidity and crudeness. He is an oppressor and exploiter, who has worked his two wives to death and has reduced his sons to subjugation. Simeon, Peter, Eben and Abbie have defied Cabot. They suffer from obsession with excessive possessiveness and are engaged in a triangular fight. With Cabot, it is a passion. He can rather destroy his farm at the time of his death than pass it on to any man, if he cannot take it with him to the next world. O’Neill writes:

**ABBIE:** *(remorselessly)* Ye can't take it with ye.

**CABOT:** *(thinks a moment--then reluctantly)* No, I calc'late not. *(After a pause--with a strange passion)* But if I could, I would, by the Eternal! 'R if I could, in my dyin' hour, I'd set it afire an' watch it burn--this house an' every ear o' corn an' every tree down t' the last blade o' hay! I'd sit an' know it was all a-dyin' with me an' no one else'd ever own what was mine, what I'd made out o' nothin' with
my own sweat 'n' blood! (A pause—then he adds with a queer affection) ‘Ceptin’ the cows. Them I’d turn free. (PEO I: 232)

Cabot is estranged by the obsession with possession of private property. He complains of being lonesome and is alienated. He is in fact, an embodiment of alienation. He admits:

.. All the time I kept gittin' lonesomer. I tuk a wife.... She never knowed me... I was allus lonesome. She died.... I tuk another wife — Eben's Maw.... She never knowed me nor nothin'. It was lonesomer 'n hell with her (PEO I: 237).

Cabot’s farm becomes an end in itself when it ceases to be a means. It has become an obsession for all the characters of the play. Young Abbie has married old Cabot, who ought to have been regarded as her father, only to inherit his farm. She has prostituted her sexuality to acquire the farm. Becoming a victim of her obsession with possessiveness, she has lost all good sense. When she sees the farm for the first time, she is not able to believe that it belongs to her. Abbie utilizes her sexuality to beget a son. From the triangular relationship – Cabot and Abbie, Cabot and Eben, and Abbie and Eben – the perversion of natural human relationship is evident / identical. After the birth of a son, when Eben has been humiliated by his father Cabot, Eben alleges Abbie has purposely duped him.

... “Ye’ve made a fool o’me- a sick dumb fool-a- purpose! Ye’ve been on’y playin’ yer sneakin’stealin’ game all along—gittin’ me t’ lie with ye so’s ye’d hev a son he’d think was his ‘n, an’ makin’ him promise he’d give ye the farm and let me eat dust, if ye did get him a son... (PEO I: 256 – 257)
Eben also suffers from obsession with possession. He thinks that the farm belongs to his mother, so he is the sole inheritor. Cabot is also lust obsessed. At the age of seventy five, marrying a woman of thirty five is proof of his obsession with lust. He should have arranged the marriage of his three sons. Instead he marries Abbie. Abbie too wants to procreate and it is evident when she tries to convince Eben:

Nature—makin’ thin's grow—bigger 'n' bigger—burnin' inside ye—
makin' ye want t' grow—into somethin' else—till ye're fined with it—and it's your'n but it owns ye, too—and makes ye grow bigger—like a tree—like them elums— (PEO I: 229)

Abbie is already sexually dissatisfied. She feels the hunger for sex. It is Abbie who has aroused Eben’s lust for her. Eben becomes a victim of Abbie’s seductiveness. He is also lust-obsessed. His relationship with a prostitute Min and later with Abbie identifies ‘Oedipus complex’ in him. Both Min and Abbie are motherly to him. Min is Cabot’s former prostitute and Abbie is a lawful wife to him. In order to take revenge on his father, he prostitutes with Min and Abbie. Even Eben forces his father to tell whether farm belongs to him as a son, or to Min or Abbie – his father’s harlot and young wife respectively. Later, in order to prove the credibility of her love to Eben, whose only love is her true joy, she has to commit the crime of infanticide. Their only son is killed. It becomes an act of nemesis. It is evident in their conversation:

EBEN: I'm as guilty as yew be! He was the child o' our sin.

ABBIE: [lifting her head as if defying God]. I don't repent that sin!

I hain't askin' God t' fergive that!
ABBIE: I got t' take my part o' the sin!...
I want t' share with ye, Abbie — prison 'r death 'r hell 'r anythin'!...(PEO I : 266-267)

In Interlude, the library itself identifies the environment in which Nina is brought up. It is a small room with a low ceiling. Professor Leeds lives in the past, ignoring the reality of the present. He has studied the Greek and Latin classics. He has also studied the French, German and Italian Classics and also old English Literature, ignoring totally modern literature. In order to possess Nina, he manipulates the wrecking of her proposed marriage to her lover, Gordon Shaw, on the plea that they shall marry after the war lest Gordon dies in the war leaving Nina a helpless widow. He makes a violent confession of his motives: “It is also true I was jealous of Gordon. I was alone and I wanted to keep your love, I hated him as one hates a thief one may not accuse, nor punish. I did my best to prevent your marriage. I was glad when he died. There is that what you wish me to say” (PEO I : 20)

Nina has been brought up in an oppressive atmosphere where he is denied all the chances of fulfilment and expression. Her behaviour becomes abnormal and aggressive. She acts violently with Gordon. She has been dreaming of love, freedom, growth expression and fulfillment and so he breaks all the shackles of morality. In her zeal to protect against a world of absolute standards, she becomes nervous and self-assertive. She regrets having forever an opportunity of getting happiness of uniting with Gordon. She is made to live with Gordon’s ghost for the rest of her life. S.K.Winther in Eugene O’Neill : A Critical Study observes that “She believes that instead of being good, because she obeyed tradition, she is in reality did. She feels that her greatest sin is that
she revered a tradition to such an extent that she violated the urge to live, love and happiness” (142). Nina violates the society and its norms created by her father, Leeds. Her defiance of her father is an effrontery to the sham values of the society which has denied her the freedom to act independently. She admits:

... And I’ve lost my happiness forever! All that last night I knew he wanted me. I knew it was only the honorable code-bound Gordon, who kept commanding from his brain, no, you mustn't, you must respect her, you must wait till you have a marriage license!... Why did I refuse? What was that cowardly something in me that cried, no, you mustn’t what would your father say?” (PEO I : 19)

Nina violates the code of morality and commits the sin of promiscuity at the army hospital. She is obsessed by the sense of guilt. After her father’s death, she confesses to Marsden, who has virtually taken her father’s place:

... Oh, I've got to be punished, Charlie, out of mercy for me, so I can forgive myself! And now father is dead, there's only you... For playing the silly slut, Charlie. For giving my cool clean body to men with hot hands and greedy eyes which they called love! Ugh! (A shiver runs over her body). ... Then I saw what a fool I'd been - a guilty fool! So be kind and punish me! (PEO I : 451)

The conflict between Nina and her father, Leeds, is the central action of the play, but the tension is also created after Nina’s marriage with Sam Evans. Mrs.Amos Evans, Sam’s mother, tells Nina the family secret of the Evans – that they inherit insanity. Mrs. Evans succeeds, after much persuasion, in prevailing upon her daughter-in-law, Nina, to abort
her pregnancy by Sam and in insisting her to get a healthy child from any healthy male. In compliance with her mother-in-law’s wishes, Nina conceives a son by Edmund Darrell, unknown to her husband. She possesses all the male characters – Leeds as father, Marsden as the father-figure, Darrell as a lover, Evans as a husband and Gordon as a son. As far as her sexual drives are concerned she is a *femme fatale*. She admits:

"(more and more strangely triumphant) My three men!.. I feel their desires converge in me... to form one complete beautiful male desire which I absorb... and am whole... they dissolve in me, their life is my life... I am pregnant with the three!... husband! ... lover!... father!... and the fourth man little man!... little Gordon!... he is mine too!... that makes it perfect!...” (PEO I : 135)

In *Interlude*, Nina’s happiness is shattered by everyone. In Act I, Nina accuses her father of having ruined her happiness by wrecking the possible marriage with Gordon Shaw. To regain her happiness which is her lust, she gives herself freely to the disabled soldiers at the hospital. She also develops a kind of guilt and anguish. In Act III, Mrs. Evans also ruins her happiness in persuading her to destroy / kill her unborn child-foeticide. For getting happiness only, Darrell and Nina enter into an adultery alliance and commit adultery. Singh in *Eugene O’Neill: Quest for Reality in His Plays* observes:

Seemingly, this "happiness" may appear to be based upon Epicureanism; but in the final analysis for Nina it is the expression of her pent-up sexual-desires, the expression of which has been so far prevented by her Puritan father. Her relations with Darrell are based upon lust. What was thought to
be a scientific experiment at the start, ironically turns out to be a means of gratifying lust. It is Nina, like Abbie in *Desire Under the Elms*, who takes the initiative to seduce Darrell. Darrell is tied to her; he has sacrificed his career for his passion for her, for Nina who possesses him magically. When he is disillusioned about Nina's possessive powers, he tries to get away, but the more he tries to run away from her, the more he is attracted to her. (96)

In *Interlude*, Charles Marsden has a mother fixation which renders him impotent and incapable of performing any action in life. Darrell thinks “he’s an old maid who seduces himself in his novels” (*PEO* I : 76). Marsden suffers from inferiority complex because of his ugly body. Nina thinks of him as a helpless woman. His is a perverted personality and is haunted by a strong mother. Like Leeds, Marsden’s mother is also a product of the Puritan tradition and this has rendered Marsden impotent. Marsden is obsessed by the Puritan tradition and this has converted him into a sexless creature. He has an opportunity for a sexless marriage with Nina when she has entered the menopause period of her life after Sam’s death. Marsden regards passion as unreal and flesh as impure and sexual activity as a distressing episode. Marsden admits: “So let’s you and me forget the whole distressing episode, regard it as an interlude, of trial and preparation, say, in which our souls have been scraped clean of impure flesh and made worthy to bleach in peace” (*PEO* I : 199). Only Darrell understands the reality that one should not meddle in the affairs of others. As Cybel in *Brown* says: “Life’s all right, if you let it alone” (*PEO* III : 180). Darrell in the same way warns Nina about meddling with others: “You’ve got to give up owning people, meddling in their lives as if you were God and had created
them...! And you’ve meddled enough with human love, old lady! Your time for that is over” (PEO 1: 169-170). The whole trouble starts when Leeds meddles in the affairs of Nina and Gordon which results in love and hate, life and death, and happiness and pain.

In Interlude, the tragedy with Nina is not of her own making but is the result of her father and the sham values of the American Puritanical society. Her father, Henry Leeds, is a scholar of the classics. He has withdrawn himself from his life and has denied what is real, natural and beautiful. He has ignored reality. S.K.Winther in Eugene O’Neill: A Critical Study says:

... Professor Leeds wanted his daughter to be happy, but he was held in the vise-like grip of New England tradition which made it impossible for him to give Nina the freedom of action necessary to her well-being. He referred her appeal for love in its fullest sense to the narrow principles of his Puritan faith—not because he believed implicitly in this doctrine, but because tradition made him helpless and unable to act in any other way. (172)

O’Neill has intended to create an unpretentious reality in his trilogy Electra. In it, he has depicted the destruction of the New England aristocracy, the perversion wrought by the oppressiveness of a system, lust-obsessed dramatic personae, the cancerous pride of Mannon’s family feuds and vengefulness. They have all emerged out of hatred, mechanization, ruthless exploitation and the horrors of war. The repressive and martinet character of Puritanism vitiates the fulfilment and expression of the Mannons and functions as a major factor in bringing about the annihilation of their lives. S.K.Winther in Eugene O’Neill: A Critical Study observes:
From the beginning the misfortunes of the Mannons grow out of an inability to face the reality of life. They live by false Puritan standards of behaviour. They did not know and could not learn that man as a psychological phenomenon is doomed to disaster; is compelled to live within the confines of a limited creed. (40)

Brigadier – General Ezra Mannon has identified Puritanism as a misshaped one. It has become a religion of death and not of life. In Act III of the ‘Homecoming’, when Lavinia is being told by Seth about the Mannon family-house, Christine talks of the Puritan moral code which curtails their lives. Puritan moral code condemns beauty, love and pleasure. The causes of the tragedy – lust, pride and revenge – are rooted deep in the past of the Mannon family. The whole trouble starts when Abe Mannon brings home a maid servant, Marie Brantome the Canuk – a French Canadian nurse. She is a strange blonde girl. Seth says: “Marie? She was always laughin’ – with something free and wild about her like an animal” (PEO II : 44). Both Abe Mannon and his brother David Mannon are lustfully attracted to her. David is forced to marry her, when she becomes pregnant. Even Ezra is crazy about her, when he is a boy. Abe has usurped David and Marie’s property. To safeguard the prestige and honour of the Mannons, Abe demolishes the house where the Mannon family lives and builds the present Mannon mansion. Through ship-building, the Mannons have flourished and amassed unlimited wealth while David has fallen into evil ways and dies disgracefully. Marie starves to death in humiliation. Adam Brant, her son, takes an oath over her body to avenge her death.

Ezra can be identified as a New England Puritan. He marries Christine who assumes him to be a romantic lover but is disillusioned after her marriage to him.
Christine, who has a voluptuous disposition, finds that her expression and fulfillment are curbed by the Puritan Ezra. Consequently, she begins to hate him. Christine is filled with bitterness. In Act IV of ‘Homecoming’ before administering poison to Ezra, Christine accuses him of having deprived her love, fulfilment and happiness. Christine cries:

You want the truth? You’ve guessed it! You’ve used me, you’ve given me children, but I’ve never once been yours! I never could be! And whose fault is it? I loved you when I married you! I wanted to give myself! But you made me so I couldn’t give! You filled me with disgust! (PEO II : 61)

That is why Christine turns to the romantic lover Brant in whom she hopes to find love, fulfilment and expression. She confesses her erotic relations to Ezra:

Yes, I dared! And all my trips to New York weren't to visit Father but to be with Adam! He's gentle and tender, he's everything you've never been. He's what I've longed for all these years with you—a lover! I love him!

So now you know the truth! (PEO II : 61)

Ezra has always felt that there is a barrier between Christine and him in their married life. It results in hatred. So, he turns to Lavinia but he identifies himself as a lover. In the end, having realized the situation, he strives to win back the love of Christine but she has reached the point of no-return and is intriguing to kill him. The repressiveness of Puritanism has led Christine to become an intriguer, plotter, adulteress, and murderess. She has found her sexual gratification in the romantic lover Brant. At Brant’s death she finds that her means of sexual gratification are closed for ever and so she commits suicide. It is mainly by the intrusion of the foreigners into the Mannon family which
seems to destroy everything. Commenting on Electra, Brenda Murphy in “O’Neill’s America: The strange interlude between the wars” says that “In Mourning Becomes Electra (1931), O’Neill’s most effective treatment of history, he has combined two characteristic strategies of American modernism, mythicizing and historicizing, they endow contemporary human experience with transcendent meaning. Electra embodies a struggle between the New England Puritan heritage of the Mannon family, and the influence of the ‘foreigners’ who have mixed with them, people who have the capacity to free America from its self-imposed oppression by the Mannons’ life-denying Puritan ideology” (136). Further, Brenda Murphy observes:

Looming over the action of the play, the house is a constant statement of the failure of Mannons, and of the United States, to overcome the failures of its native form of Puritanism, which, as a typical American modernist, O’Neill saw it as a moral hypocrisy and a life-denying repression of emotion, sexuality and aesthetic response to beauty. Like the false face on the Mannon house, the overlay of a pseudo-classical civilization has served only to emphasize the ugliness of the Mannon house. (136)

In Electra, the Mannon house is identified as a symbol of Puritanism. Singh in Eugene O’Neill: Quest for Reality in His Plays writes:

The Mannon house, with its old colonial furniture, photographs of George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, John Marshall and old Mannons, thirty acres of vast grassy lands and household articles, forms an integral part of the action of the play. It reveals the Puritan culture of New England
Society in the second half of the nineteenth century. Its gray stone walls signify the inhumanity and rigidity of the Calvinistic culture. It’s white portico functions as glitter to cover the loss of humanistic values, thereby bringing to light the dehumanizing norms of its inhabitants. (102-103)

The magnificence of the Mannon house is a symbol of the power and wealth of the Mannons. Yet, it has a foreboding effect. It has a suffocating quality. The town folk think that it is a haunted place. It is the symbol of the decaying culture. Even Lavinia remarks about the abominable and death-like character of the house.

O’Neill in *Cometh* portrays the tension between the illusions of social derelicts and the harsh realities of life. The confrontation between illusion and reality is very harsh in this play. By dramatizing the illusions, O’Neill tries to identify the sham values of a decadent culture. The play exposes a panoramic vision of the dehumanization of man. The locale of the play is the backroom and a section of the Bedrock bar at Harry Hopes saloon in the West side of New York in the summer of 1912. It is a haven for social derelicts and bums, who have been abandoned by the society as lesser mortals. Larry tells Parritt about the horror:

LARRY. (*with a sardonic grin*) What is it? It's the No Chance Saloon. It's Bedrock Bar, The End of the Line Cafe, The Bottom of the Sea Rathskeller! Don't you notice the beautiful calm in the atmosphere? That's because it's the last harbor. No one here has to worry about where they're going next, because there is no farther they can go. It's a great comfort to them. Although even here they keep up the appearances of life with a few
harmless pipe dreams about their yesterdays and tomorrows as you’ll see for yourself if you’re here long. (PEO III : 587)

In this play, O’Neill has identified his characters as outcasts, rootless and abandoned men. They are identified as victims of the ironies of life. These outcasts are not worthless people. They have their glorious past but at the present they remain worthless as their lives have been reduced and ruined. It is as Winther observes:

... But the paradox is that they are also symbols of the ideals by which men live. They have fought in the Cause. They have been leaders of the Great Movement. They were heroes in wars national and social. Hugo served ten years in prison for the Cause. Each in his own way has been apprenticed to the Ideal, and when the Ideal failed he drifted to this Last Resort Saloon where he nourishes his pipe dream and drinks rotgut whisky, waiting for the Big Day. Each in his own way is the complete paradox. Each reveals both sides of the badly minted coin at a single glance. They are the contradiction which is man.” (Qt. in Raleigh, Twentieth Century Interpretations of “The Iceman Cometh” : 74)

These derelicts have been rejected as waste by an apathetic society. Each derelict has his/her own illusions. They cling to them and retain them. Robert Brunstein in The Theatre of Revolt says:

Thus Hugo's aristocratic will to power through pretended love of the proletariat reflects on political illusions; Joe's pugnacious demand for equality with the whites, on racial illusions; Chuck and Cora's fantasy of
marriage and a farm, on domestic illusions; the prostitute's mysterious
distinction between "tarts" and "whores", on status illusions; Parritt's false
motives for having betrayed his mother, on psychological illusions; Willie
Oban's excuse for having discontinued law school, on intellectual
illusions; Larry Slade's pretense at disillusionment and detachment, on
philosophical illusions and Hickey’s belief that he has found salvation, on
religious illusions. (341-342)

These dreamers have created a Utopian society. They remain more beaten, dejected,
spiritless, and defeated. General Piet Wetgoen, Captain Cecil Lewis, Police Lieutanant,
Pat Mcgloin, Circusman, Ed Mosher, and James Cameron do not have the guts to
approach the authorities for the redressal of wrongs and injustices done to them. These
dreamers are made to live on their illusions. Larry and Don are victims of Rosal Parritt, a
great anarchist. Hickey is the victim of his wife, Evelyn. Travis Bogard in Contour in
Time : The Plays of Eugene O’Neill observes that,

... Parritt, Slade and Hickey are seen, perhaps, as aspects of the same man.
They overlap at least, in their acts of betrayal, their despairing desire to
get rid of pity, their refusal to enter the world of the dreaming chorus. Yet,
although they resemble one another, they stand opposed as antagonists as
well, forming a hostile triangle against the unity of the background. (411)

Larry is an old Syndicalist – Anarchist, who has devoted thirty years of his life to the
movement, but is disillusioned to find that the movement was only a dream. He is
alienated and waiting for a long sleep. His waiting for death is his illusion. Hickey doubts
the credibility of his claim and suggests that he shall take a leap from his business. His reflective intellectualism, claiming to have a comprehensive approach to the problem is the other illusion which has rendered him inactive. He tries to evade the situation and shirks his responsibility when Parritt seeks his advice on how to absolve from his guilt. Larry is a protagonist of tragedy. He suffers throughout the play and through his suffering he identifies mobility. He identifies reality and prepares himself to face it. He has been antagonizing Hickey. He has also realized his responsibility towards Parritt and performs his parental duty by helping to absolve him from his guilt – ridden soul. When other bums have taken refuge to liquor, and recreating illusion after disillusionment, Larry is the only man to face reality. He ignores their invitation to return to their fold. Like Lavinia in Electra, only in the end, he identifies his failure. He says: “Be God, there’s no hope! I’ll never be a success in the grandstand – or anywhere else! Life is too much for me! I’ll be a weak tool looking with pity at the two sides of everything till the day I die! (with an intense bitter sincerity) May that day come soon”. (PEO III : 726)

In Cometh, Hickey is a hardware salesman. His arrival is expected by the bums at Hope’s saloon. He is introduced by Larry to Parritt as: “A hardware drummer, an old friend of Harry Hope’s and all the gang. He’s a grand guy. He comes here twice a year regularly on a periodical drunk and blows in all his money” (PEO III : 586). He is disenchanted with his illusions and persuades others to follow it. Larry is the first person to admit that he has been converted by Hickey. Hugo is also disillusioned about his dream of a revolution. Similarly, Chuck and Cora are disillusioned with their illusion of marriage and settling on a farm. Hope reluctantly goes outside but comes back more frightened and confused. Ed Mosher and Pat Mcgloin are also disillusioned about their
imagined worth. Willie Oban is disillusioned about his intellect. Joe Mott reconciles himself to the racial prejudice of reality. Piet Wetjoen and Cecil Lewis realize that they are no longer war-heroes. James Cameron finds that it was alcoholism that broke his marriage and that he is to blame for it and not his wife.

Hickey can be compared with Loman of Miller’s *Salesman*. Both are salesmen. Loman’s character is the result of socio-economic forces. He is identified as a failure. He has been denied the identity of a salesman. His is a tragedy. His tragedy is the failure of a salesman whereas Hickey’s tragedy is paradoxically the success of a salesman. In Loman’s life, his obsession with the myth of success brings out a tragedy. In Hickey’s case, it is the obsession with guilt that destroys him completely. Hickey is identified as a bringer of death. Robert Brunstein in *Theatre of Revolt* says:

> Thus, Hickey, Death and the Iceman are one. The truth doesn’t set you free, it kills you dead; the peace which Hickey brings to Harry Hope’s saloon is the peace of the grave. Hickey, therefore, is the false Messiah – not the Resurrection and the life, but the ‘great Nihilist’, starting ‘a movement’ which will blow up the world. (344)

Hickey is identified as a man who is isolated from his social context. He is a victim of repression. First, he is repressed by his father and in the second instance, he becomes the victim of the repression of his ever-forgiving wife, Evelyn. Even, he has not learnt to handle temptation. He says: “I could never learn to handle temptation. I’d want to reform and mean it. I’d promise Evelyn, and I’d promise myself, and I’d believe it. I’d tell her, it’s the last time. And she’d say, ‘I know it’s the last time, Teddy. You’ll never do it
again” (**PEO** III : 712). In fact, Hickey committed adultery. He himself accepts,

But you know how it is, travelling around. The damned hotel rooms. I’d get seeing things in the wall paper. I’d get bored as hell. Lonely and homesick. But at the same time sick of hope. I’d feel free and I’d want to celebrate a little. I never drank on the job, so it had to be damns. Any tart... (**PEO** III : 712-713)

In sex, man is a buyer and woman is a seller. Sex has become a commodity. Similarly, Cora and Chuck do not get married as Chuck knows that Cora is a tart and that Cora would not be tied to one man. For the same reason, Rocky gives Parritt sincere advice and offers to help him to start a brothel. In fact, Pearl, Margie and Cora are selling sex. Rocky is making profit by exploiting the sex of Pearl and Margie. Hickey is a typical salesman. In spite of his success as a salesman, he has failed ironically. He has killed his wife out of remorse. His is the tragedy of the ideal of selling – whether it is hardware, religion, sex or salvation – that has failed. Similarly, all Hickey’s ideals – his love for his wife and his reforming the bums – turn out to be illusions. Hickey’s tragedy is, ultimately, the tragedy of a dying culture, which has brought about dehumanization and a sense of rootlessness in man.

In **Cometh**, Don is the son of Ross, a great revolutionary woman leader and Larry, who does not accept him as his son but his complete denial raises doubts about its credibility. Don has betrayed his mother. Tormented by a guilt-ridden soul, he has come to Larry to seek a solution to his self-condemnation and self-denial. He makes his confession in three phases. In the first confession, he says that he betrayed his mother on
patriotic grounds. He admits: “I began to feel patriotic and love this country. I saw it was the best government in the world, where everything was equal and had a chance.” (PEO III : 648-649). His patriotism proves to be a failure. In a bit to achieve reality, he makes a second confession where he says that his patriotism is a dream and what he wants is only money. He admits: “I’ll admit what I told you last night was a lie—that bunk about getting patriotic and my duty to my country. But here’s the true reason, Larry – the only reason’. It was just for money! I got struck on a whore and wanted dough to blow in on her and have a good time!” (PEO III : 667). Don’s problem is to find a possible solution by which he can exonerate his soul from the sin that he has committed. He has committed the sin of matricide. In the third confession, he reveals that it was out of hatred for his mother that he committed matricide. It is because the mother has denied him all opportunities of expression and fulfillment. Don says: “You remember what Mother’s like, Larry. She makes all the decisions. She’s always decided what I must do. She doesn’t like anyone to be free but herself”. (PEO III : 719-720). Further, he admits: “You know I’m really much guiltier than he is. You know what I did is a much worse murder. Because she is dead and yet she has to live” (PEO III : 720). When Larry advises him to commit suicide in order to get away from the guilt of his tormented soul, he is grateful to him. He says “Thanks, Larry. I just wanted to be sure. I can see now it’s the only possible way I can ever get free from her... It’ll give her the chance to play the incorruptible Mother of the Revolution, whose only child is the proletariat. She’ll be able to say: ‘Justice is done! So may all traitors die!'” (PEO III : 720). He casts away his illusion and finds nobility, peace and reality. In the past, he has identified himself as a weakling and a guilty man, but now he has an identity of a strong, graceful, free man
away from the feeling of guilt. Commenting on the death of a salesman in *Cometh*, Cyrus Day in “The Iceman and the Bridegroom: Some Observations on the Death of O’Neill’s Salesman” says:

*The Iceman Cometh* is a play about the death of a salesman; its central theme is the relationship between men's illusions and their will to live. The salesman, Theodore Hickman, or Hickey, as he is called, is a more complex character than Arthur Miller's Willy Loman, and O'Neill's diagnosis of the spiritual malaise of the twentieth century is more profound than Miller's. Loman is depicted from the outside: he is the victim of a false and wholly external conception of what constitutes success. He wants, in a worldly sense, to solve the riddle of life, but the questions he asks are superficial and relatively easy for an audience or a reader to answer.

Hickey is depicted from the inside. He is more successful as a salesman than Loman, but he is the victim of a far more insidious disease. He is not versed at first hand (as O'Neill was) in philosophic nihilism, but he has somehow become aware, presumably through a sort of intellectual osmosis, that modern man no longer believes in objective reality and truth. Loman is adrift in contemporary American society; Hickey is adrift in the universe. The difference is a measure of the difference between O'Neill's aims and the aims of almost all other modern dramatists. (79)

In *Poet*, Cornelius Melody and his wife Nora Melody represent the feudal way of living
whereas Sara Melody and the Yankees (the Harfords) symbolize bourgeois aspirations. Cornelius, one time major of his Majesty’s seventh Dragoons, lives on the illusions of his glorious past.

He is the son of a thievin' she been keeper who got rich by money lendin' and squeezin' tenants and every manner of trick... He made up his mind he'd bring Con up a true gentleman, so he packed him off to Dublin to school, and after that to the College with sloos of money to prove himself the equal of any gentleman's son. But Con found, while there was plenty to drink on him and borrow money, there was few didn’t sneer behind his back at his pretensions. (TP : 10)

He is identified as the embodiment of pride, arrogance, vanity, and snobbery. They are all inherited from his father. Melody’s illusions takes a romantic turn, when he is in Spain where he is caught by a Spanish noble making love to his wife. In the duel that follows, he kills the noble but he has to resign from the army. The scandal is hushed up because of Melody’s fine record of bravery. Melody’s illusions of gentlemanliness and arrogance lead him to alienation. He feels isolated and unable to find his identity. His feudalistic pretensions harm his conjugal relationship. It is told by Cregan: “He married her because he’d fallen in love with her, but he was ashamed of her in his pride at the same time because her folks were only ignorant peasants on his estate, as poor as poor...” (TP : 12). He ignores reality and deteriorates in economic condition. He is soon on the verge of insolvency. It is voiced by Nora in Poet. “Neilan sent a note to me about his bill. He says we’ll have to settle by the end of the week or we’ll get no more groceries... There’s the intrist on the mortgage due the first” (18). Sara, the daughter realizes the
exigencies of the feudal system and sneers painfully at her father’s pursuance of his aristocratic illusions at the cost of family’s bare essentials. Melody is identified an embittered man. Even the identity of Melody is described in the stage direction.

... There is a look of wrecked distinction about it, of brooding, humiliated pride. His bloodshot grey eyes have an insulting cold stare which anticipate insult. His manner is that of a polished gentleman. Too much so. He overdoes it and one soon feels that he is overplaying a role which has become more real than his real self to him... (TP : 27)

Further, his clumsy identity is evident when Singh in Eugene O’Neill : Quest for Reality in His Plays says: “His actions and pretensions of being a Byronic hero, and reciting from Byron’s ‘Childe Harold’ in front of a mirror will be undoubtedly regarded as clownish in the realistic world. His is a dual personality. He attaches more importance to his artificial self-image than to his real self” (130). Sara, like Hickey in Cometh, tries to wake him up and to bring him to awareness. Sara says:

God help you, it must be a wonderful thing to live in a fairy tale where only dreams are real to you... Father! Will you never let yourself wake up-not even now when you’re sober, or nearly? It is stark mad you’ve gone, so you can’t tell any more what’s dead and a lie, and what’s the living truth? (TP : 39)

When he faces naked reality, Melody becomes “... a Byronic hero, noble, embittered, disdainful, defying his tragic fate brooding over past glories” (TP : 44). He also laments: “I am but a ghost haunting a ruin ... I’m done – finished – no future but the past” (TP :
Melody’s illusions of aristocracy and nobility put him in a ludicrous situation when Deborah comes to see his tavern to see her sick son and he plays the dandy to her. He gets a rebuff from her when he tries to seduce her in a clownish manner. She says:

“Pah! You reek of whisky! You are drunk, Sir! You are insolent and disgusting! I do not wonder your inn enjoys such meagre patronage, if you regale all your guests of my sex with this absurd performance!”  (TP: 55). However, Melody has reduced Sara to the level of a menial. Melody’s ego does not permit him to recognize his own blood publicly. When Gadsby, the family attorney of the Harfords, comes to settle accounts with Melody, and guesses the waitress to be his daughter, Melody’s ego does not permit him to accept the truth. Melody raises a question: “No! Do I look to you Sir, like a man who would permit his daughter to work as a waitress?”  (TP: 91). When Gadsby, on Harfords behalf, offers three thousand dollars to virtually buy him out, it is a great humiliation to his ego. The proposed duel between him and Harford ends in a donnybrook resulting in his most humiliating defeat. The greatest injury to the pride of the presumptuous arrogant, and overbearing knight is his defeat before Deborah to whom he has gallantly played the gentleman. Melody’s defeat at the hands of the Harfords marks his disillusionment and disenchantment. Melody broods and laments:

... Wasn't she the livin' reminder, so to spake, av all the lyin' boasts and dreams? He meant to kill her first wid one pistol, then himself wid the other. But faix, he saw the shot that killed her finished him, too. There wasn’t much pride left in the auld lunatic, anyway, and seeing her die made an end av him. So he didn’t bother shooting himself, because it’d be a mad thing to waste a good bullet on a corpse! (He laughs coarsely). (TP
In *Poet*, Sara is identified as a blend of fatalistic and bourgeois illusion. She is willing to do anything to achieve her goal. In fact, Sara and Melody antagonize each other. Melody has identified Sara as he admits: “I can see in you is a common, greedy, scheming, cunning peasant girl, whose only thought is money and who has shamelessly thrown herself at a young man’s head because his family happens to possess a little wealth and position” (TP : 86). Sara is an embodiment of freedom of love. This brings her in direct contrast to her mother Nora.

Nora in *Poet* is a product of the depressed woman in feudalism, having no dignity, no liberty but doomed to slavery, suffering and humiliation. She has suffered all through her life at the hands of the proud, arrogant and overbearing husband, who has given her a life of servitude. She has always been subservient to her boastful husband. She is modest, meek and submissive. She painfully worries herself to death out of fatigue and exhaustion, when her megalomaniac husband goes on this revenging mission to Henry Harford’s mansion. She admits:

> Has he ever cared for anyone except himself and his pride? Sure he’d never stoop to think of me, the grand gentleman in his red livery or bloody England ‘His Pride, indade! What is it but a lie?... I’m the only one in the world he knows nivir at his dream.’ (TP : 105)

Nora is obsessed with the Puritanical concept of sin. Her soul is guilt-ridden and torments her. She believes that all her difficulties – economic social, physical and mental – are the result of heavenly punishment given to her for having premarital sexual
relationship with Melody. Nora admits: “It’s because I’m afraid it’s God’s punishment, all the sorrow and trouble that’s come on us, and I have the black tormint in my mind that it’s the fault of the mortal sin I did with him unmarried, and the promise he made me make to leave the church that’s kept me from ever confessin’ to a piest... sure, what’s rehumanism but a pain in your body? I could bear ten of it. It’s the pain of guilt in my soul” (TP: 105-106). The play also reveals how the Harfords have the illusions of freedom and liberty and Jonathan Harford, Simon’s great grandfather has fought for freedom in France. He has become a rapid Jacobin and worshipper of Robespierce. He has died wearing his old uniform of the French Republican National Guard. On the contrary, the Harfords enforce slavery in their own country. Deborah admits: “And finally were even driven to embrace the profits of the slave trade – as a triumphant climax, you understand, of their long battle to escape the enslavement of freedom by enslaving it” (TP: 64).

In Mansions, O’Neill has dramatized the reality by showing how the obsession with possessiveness and perversion of sex can lead to alienation and isolation. The three major protagonists, Simon Harford, Sara Harford, his wife, and Deborah Harford, his mother, are typical aspirants of acquisition. They are engaged in a triangular fight. They try to possess and destroy others. They are motivated by greed. In their pursuance of their greed and avarice, they create a world devoid of humanistic values.

The play opens with a scene of an abandoned log Cabin by the side of a lake in the woods of Massachusetts. Deborah has come to steal Simon away from Sara. She is unsuccessful as Sara has taken the upper hand in this fight. Deborah is a strange woman. She is obsessed with an illusion of being the mistress of King Louis of France. Deborah
says in **Mansions:**

(... she dreams aloud). The Palace at Versailles—I wear a gown of a crimson satin and gold, embroidered in pearls—Louis gives me his arm, while all the Court watches enviously—the men, lovers that my ambition has used and discarded, or others who desire to be my lovers but dare not hope—the women who hate me for my wit and beauty, who envy me my greater knowledge of love and of men's hearts—I walk with the King in the gardens—he whispers tenderly: ‘My throne it is your heart, Beloved, and my fair kingdom your beauty’. He kisses me on the lips—as I lead him into the little Temple of Love he built for me. (18)

There are two unfulfilled desires in her. The first is her unsatiated sexual desire. The second one is her ambition for power. She becomes a royal whore. She uses her beauty and lust to dominate others. She admits in **Mansions:**

I prefer to be the secret power behind the Throne - a greedy adventuress who has risen from the gutter to nobility by her wit and charm - who uses love but loves only herself, who is entirely ruthless and lets nothing stand in the way of the final goal of power she set for herself - to become the favourite of the King and make him, through his passion for her, her slave! (27)

Deborah willfully reminds Simon of his dream of writing a book on establishing a Utopian society to distract him from Sara’s influence. But Sara is shrewd enough to understand her game. She thwarts her attempt. In her obsession with female
possessiveness, Deborah has destroyed Simon totally. She has also become a victim of her own destructive obsession. She fails to attain nobility through suffering. She remains a soulless creature.

Simon’s identity crisis starts with his greatest illusion to be a writer of a book that will establish a Utopian society. He clings to his idealistic illusion of reforms. He admits: “In a free society, there must be no private property to tempt men’s greed into enslaving one another. We must protect man from his stupid possessive instincts until he can be educated to outgrow them spiritually” (MSM : 22). Simon believes in Rousseau’s idealism. Simon identifies himself with Rousseau. He says:

I still believe with Rousseau, as firmly as ever, that at bottom human nature is good and unselfish. It is what we are pleased to call civilization that has corrupted it. We must return to Nature and simplicity and then we’ll find that the people—those whom Father sneers at as greedy Mob—are as genuinely noble and honorable as the false aristocracy of our present society pretends to be. (MSM : 23)

In fact, he tries to become the Napoleon of France. Sara’s greatest illusion is her ambition to rise in the world. She is a calculative, scheming, cunning and greedy woman, who can go to any length to achieve her goal. She is contrived to get hold of Simon. Evidently, Sara has utilized her sex for the advancement and realization of her ambition. It is perversion of sex for commercial purpose.

In the end, when Deborah hypnotizes Simon, who is on the verge of insanity, Sara realizes the hollowness of her pride. She begs Deborah to spare Simon’s life. It implies her alienation. She has realized the emptiness of her ambition. She is filled with
total disillusionment and disenchantment. Sara has suffered a lot. It is through suffering, she becomes a new woman, who understands human values. She has regained her lost soul. Deborah and Simon have lost their souls. It is only Sara who has regained her soul. Deborah and Simon are the representatives of the corrupt materialistic world. They have fallen prey to the obsession of insatiate greed, possessiveness and distortion of human values. They fail to realize the hollowness of crass-materialism.

O’Neill’s *Night* is the most autobiographical play. It is a play of old sorrows, written in tears and blood. Singh in *Eugene O’Neill : Quest for Reality in His Plays* observes:

O’Neill has dramatized reality by exposing the socio-economic conditions and circumstances in a capitalist society. These conditions are the capabilities of a prospective artist by creating a money-obsession in him leading to his alienation and self-destruction which in turn play havoc with the aspirations and hopes of the members of his family: an immigrant Irish family, whose members fought heroically for their survival and found the bitterness of the fruit at its achievement. (143-144)

It is a tragedy in the modern sense. It is the result of a father’s obsession with money. It also includes deprivation of childhood experiences and the resultant feeling of emptiness. It is also about the estrangement between the mother and the son. In short, it is a poignant portrayal of the complex human relationships – a cobweb of failures and frustrations. So that only Sidney Finkelstein in “*Existentialism and Alienation in American Literature*” writes:
The tragedy develops like classic Greek drama, but with 'fate' or 'gods' replaced by the living social pattern in which money, as Marx says, 'functions as the almighty being'. O'Neill shows how in the father, the thought of money is so ever-present that even when he seems to recognize its control over him, he has not freed himself.

... The father's money obsession, his never ending nightmare of being driven back to the deprivation in his childhood, becomes the key to his alienation from his talented self, and to the estrangement between himself and his wife, even as they love one another. And since, he, the bread-winner, the decision-maker, represents the harsh world of reality, her estrangement becomes an estrangement from reality itself, so that she finally seeks refuge in delusions. This estrangement of the mother, in turn, destroys the older son, who watches it with impotent horror, and whose capacity for love is consumed in the despairing attachment to his mother. All this inflicts incurable wounds in the younger son, the artist. Thus, we see how through all the complexities of human relationships, 'private property' becomes the generating force of alienation in private life. (153)

Tyrone is affected by extreme poverty in his childhood. His is an existential struggle. He has found the power of a dollar. It has become an obsession with him. He has phobia for poverty. It deprives him. It leads him to the poor-house in his old age. It leads him to stinginess. It destroys his artistic talent and his family life. In his self-analysis, he confesses his money-obsession to Edmund. He admits: “Yes, may be life overdid the lesson for me, and make a dollar worth too much, and the time came when that mistake
ruined my career as a fine actor” (\textbf{LDJN} : 130). The money-obsession in an artist leads him to alienation from his art. It hampers the progress of an artist. It also hinders the development of art. There is a chain of cause-and-effect behind Tyrone’s Phobia of the poor-house. At the age of ten he becomes the head of the family when his father has deserted them. He has to work hard for the survival of his family. He has narrowing experiences in the most inhuman living conditions. He is forced to be a child labourer. Tyrone’s obsession with possessiveness, after having destroyed his artistic talent, ruins his beloved wife, Mary Cavan Tyrone. It is at the birth of Edmund, their child, that he engages a quack, who turns her into a dope-fiend. Later, when finding his stinginess and how it has ruined the family to the core, Edmund blasts him:

... your damned stinginess! If you'd spent money for a decent doctor when she was so sick after I was born, she’d never have known morphine existed! Instead you put her in the hands of a hotel quack who wouldn’t admit his ignorance and took the easiest way out, not giving a damn what happened to her afterwards. All because his fee was cheap! Another one of your bargains! (\textbf{LDJN} : 121)

Mary’s illusion is that she has married an actor who is below her social status. She has two dreams: either to become a nun or to become a convent pianist. They are not fulfilled because of her marriage to James. Mary’s alienation is due to two reasons. She has married below her rank and that James is always on a tour. The Tyrones do not have any home worthy of the name. The absence of permanent home creates in Mary an obsession of homelessness and rootlessness. Mary cries: “one-night stands, cheap hotels, dirty trains, bearing children, never having a home” (\textbf{LDJN} : 89). She is hypersensitive. She is
too weak to face the harsh realities of life. She finds escape in the form of dreams; illusions and dope. She lives in the past. She loves fog because it hides her from the world. She hates the foghorn because it is a reminder of reality. Mary’s attempts at creating illusions may be compared to that of Deborah’s creating dreams of being the mistress of an emperor in her summer-house in Mansions. Both of them escape from the harsh realities of life through their unconscious minds. Theirs is a journey of no return. Mary’s excessive love for her wedding gown is like Major Melody’s love for his red uniform. It is a symbol of nostalgia for the glorious past. It is her alienation that drives her to religion. Her trying to find her spectacles symbolizes her efforts to regain her lost faith in a faithless world. In Night, Mary admits: “If I could only find the faith I lost, so I could pray again!” (92).

James Tyrone Jr. is the second victim of James’s obsession with possessiveness. He is Tyrone’s elder son. He has the potentialities to become an artist. But he remains a total failure in his life. It is because of the negligence and estrangement of his parents. His relationship with Edmund is based on love-hate relationship. He tries to spoil Edmund so that his own failures may appear less conspicuous. He admits in Night: “Made my mistakes look good. Made getting drunk romantic. Made whores fascinating vampires instead of poor, stupid, diseased slobs they really are. Made fun of work as sacker’s game. Never wanted you succeed and make me look even worse by comparison. Wanted you to fail. Always jealous of you. Mama’s baby, Papa’s Pet” (146).

Edmund is the third victim of James’s money obsession. He is his younger son. He is a born artist. The Tyrones have destroyed the creative faculty of Edmund by their apathy. The very core of his existential identity is at stake. He is estranged by his parents
and brothers. He is attacked by consumption. Edmund, like other Tyrones, journeys through fog and night but unlike them he sees beyond illusions. He reveals his aesthetic experiences to his father. His first experience of identification occurs when he is on the Squarehead bound for Buenos Aires. Edmund in Night admits:

I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it, and for a moment I lost myself – actually lost my life. I was set free! I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of Man, to Life itself!... (134)

Edmund’s second experience of identification with reality comes when he is on board on ‘The American Line’. After listening to Edmund’s aesthetic experience, Tyrone for the first time realizes that his younger son, Edmund, is a born artist. In fact, as Singh in Eugene O’Neill : Quest for Reality in His Plays relates:

In Long Day’s Journey into Night the quest ends with the Tyrones going in different directions and to different destinations. These psychological journeys are diametrically opposed. For Mary it is a hopeless journey into the fog of dope and dream and confusion and oblivion. For Jamie, it is a journey of hopelessness leading to cynicism and despair. For James Tyrone it is understanding and the recognition of the right path that leads to affection, sacrifice and love. For Edmund it is the birth of an artist identifying himself with the cosmic dimension of reality based on eternity and universality.
The playwright has portrayed reality well, showing how the lack of social security in capitalist society creates obsession with money and private property in an artist, who in the process of money-making is alienated from his art and from his family. Alienation and estrangement engender abnormal behavior in the protagonists who are totally destroyed by their obsessions, fears, anxieties and complexes. (150-51)

On the whole, the whole Tyrone family is destroyed by the father’s obsession with money. It is not only the wish to accumulate more wealth that ruins the family but also the father’s psychological discomfort that he has identified with his family members that has caused disintegration among the family members and driven them to the world of failures. However, many reasons can be attributed to these failures. Commenting on Tyrone family in *Night*, John Henry Raleigh in “O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey into Night* and New England Irish Catholicism” says:

Excessively familial; non-communal; sexually chaste; turbulent; drunken; alternately and simultaneously sentimental and ironical about love; pathologically obsessed with betrayal; religious-blasphemous; loquacious: these are some of the historical attributes of the Irish character. To these nine characteristics should be added a tenth, which was an emergent, post-famine phenomenon, namely, a tendency toward less and later marriage on the part of the young men and a tendency, therefore for these young men to remain at home with their father and mother. In short, here is an abstract picture of the Tyrone family, and it is on these generic lines that the chapters, and the interrelationships, in *Long Day’s Journey into Night*
Night are formed. (128)

In Misbegotten O’Neill is concerned with how human values transcend obsession with greed, possessiveness and the desire to supplant. The human values are identified and shown to supersede the crass materialism that is scheming swindling, covetousness, and exploitation. James has wasted himself on evil ways. He is dissipated and guilt-ridden. He suffers from an Oedipus complex or mother-fixation. He is alienated and has become a victim of self-abnegation and self-hatred. He has become neurotic. Tyrone’s problem is to find a confessor to make confession of the sins committed by him. He desires to die peacefully. He finds his confessor in Josie Hogan, whom he loves. He has wasted himself on racing, whoring and drinking. He has also changed his ways on the insistence of his mother, Mary and remains an abstractor for two years. His mother’s sudden illness leading to her death in the western part of the USA, where they have gone to make a settlement of an estate, leads him to the belief that he has been duped by fate. He becomes revengeful and subsequently he becomes a victim of self-destruction. He loses the meaning and fulfillment of life. He becomes a Mephistophelian, devoid of humanistic values. He admits in Misbegotten:

... It was as if I wanted revenge—because I’d been left alone—because I knew I was lost, without any hope left—that all I could do would be drink myself to death, because no one was left who could help me. (His face hardens and a look of cruel vindictiveness comes into it—with a strange horrible satisfaction in his tone). No, I didn’t forget even in that pig’s arms! I remembered the last two lines of a lousy tear-jerker song I’d heard when I was a kid kept singing over and over in my brain. ‘And baby’s
cries can’t waken her in the baggage coach ahead. (133-134)

He wants to forget the feeling of being deserted, lonely and hopeless in wine and whoring. He identifies himself with all the evil things. He admits:

I had to bring her body East to be buried beside the Old Man. I took a drawing room and hid in it with a case of booze. She was in her coffin in the baggage car. No matter how drunk I got, I couldn't forget that for a minute. I found I couldn't stay alone in the drawing room. It became haunted. I was going crazy...I bribed the porter to take a message to her and that night she sneaked into my drawing-room. She was bound for New York, too. So every night - for fifty bucks a night—*(He opens his eyes and now he stares torturously through the moonlight into the drawing room).*” (132-133)

The greatest sin that he identifies in his attitude is the sin that torments his soul because of his absence in the funeral ceremonies of his mother due to drunkenness. He is tormented and agonized. He has made confessions of his sins and crimes. He has suffered and punished himself for his crimes. Through suffering, he realizes that he has become a new man. He admits in *Misbegotten*: “It’s a new one on me. Sort of at peace with myself and this lousy life – as if all my sins had been forgotten” (150).

Josie, the daughter of Phil Hogan, a tenant farmer of Tyrone’s estate pretends as if she is not a virgin. This is due to her eagerness to suppress her complex that she is sexually unattractive to men. In reality, she is an innocent virgin. She is Cybel to Tyrone. Persuaded by her father, Phil and her brother, Mike Hogan, she becomes a party to the
plan to swindle Tyrone Jr. She has consented to play the whore to Tyrone by selling her sex to him. She admits in *Misbegotten*: “Be God, if I’m to play the whore. I deserve my pay! We’ll make him sign a paper he owes me ten thousand dollars the minute the estate is settled” (90). But at the time of the planned seduction, Josie’s chastity becomes more powerful than her intention to swindle. Josie has also confessed her attempted crime to swindle Tyrone Jr. After making her confession, she finds that she is a new woman.

Reuben is the young Adam in *Dynamo* whose adolescence is marked by romantic love for Ada and youthful idealization of life and God. Because of the harsh joke that Ada's father Fife plays on him and also because of betrayal by his mother, Reuben undergoes a sort of loss of innocence in the middle of the play. On his return home after years of disappearance, he has a hard boiled look, has been sexually initiated, hates his mother and "that boob" his father, and has renounced God. To all appearances, his innocence is gone and rebellion and disillusionment with the world are complete. But Reuben has simply moved from one state of innocence to another. In his new-found innocence, Reuben believes that there is no God, or if there is one, he is dead. There is a certain kind of naiveté in announcing the death of God and in transferring that position to self. But Reuben is not a Nietzschean rebel in the complete sense of the term. If God is dead, Electricity is his new God. His past love for mother now turns to a passionate worship of the Dynamos which he calls “Mother of Life”.

Act II, Scene III shows his devoted worship of the new power through which a miracle will happen and the kingdom of happiness will come back on earth. As a climax of Reuben's reversion from experience to innocence, he performs the sacrificial ritual of a sex act with Ada at the "altar" of the Dynamo and later kills her. His own ritualistic
suicide indicates his new faith and innocence. His last cry is that of a child seeking shelter in its mother's protective lap. Reuben's innocence, in short, consists of his inability to live without faith, his continued belief in a miracle, and his confused identification of the images of mother, mistress and the new god (or goddess) Dynamo.

In the context of O'Neill's theological concerns in this play, the Dynamo is the Satan who has beguiled the innocent Adam from his sheltered, blissful existence. As Thoreau sees the locomotive as an evil intrusion into the idyllic peace of his Walden, O'Neill shows concern with the new science that first deprives man of his faith and peace of mind, and then destroys him. The dynamo can also be compared to the Eden's forbidden fruit of knowledge that has delighted man at the same time has become the cause for his downfall.

In this sense, O'Neill is old-fashioned. But fortunately, the dramatic interest of the play does not rest so much on the God-science conflict, nor on the theme of the 'corruption' of the 'garden' by the 'machine.' It rests mainly on Reuben's psychological conflicts of love-hate for woman and God and specifically on his ironical reversion to innocent blindness in his search for truth. The play does not settle the theological point whether God is or is not. It shows the futility of man's engaging in such a quest. That in his rebellion man acquires a new innocence which is equally insufficient and is indicative of this futility.

Thus, O'Neill, in his plays, is concerned with identity crisis. His men and women feel odd at different times and situations. Their society, religion, community and life at home fail to give them comfort and negate their identities. They suffer from alienation
and mental breakdown as they are ostracized and corroded to become misfits in a society. They remain outsiders to the society as they fail to inhabit their space. They remain victims as they feel a growing sense of emptiness being derelicts.